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Of the book as a whole, it may be said that expressions of opinion overtop the narrative. Nevertheless, the book has its very useful chapters, it sheds light on a variety of hitherto obscure points, and from the author's long familiarity with China's conditions and study of her problems there come occasional flashes of incisive judgment and illuminating exposition.

He [Li] had all the Oriental's contempt for those who demonstrate with force and are reluctant or afraid to use it [p. 216]. Viewed as a whole, Li's record as a statesman and domestic politician is distinguished from that of his most celebrated colleagues . . . by his steady perception of the fact that change was inevitable and that the path of wisdom lay in making timely preparations to meet it; also, in that he realized that the materials available for making such preparations were few and inadequate [p. 275]. With all his acuteness, he never appears to have realized that the weakness of the state was not a matter of mechanics, but of morals; that no military or financial reorganization could ever be effectively carried out without the inculcation of a keen sense of duty and public spirit in the official hierarchy [p. 293]. But, when all is said and done, he was the best and bravest steersman in the Empire, and for thirty years kept the ship in commission under the Dragon flag [p. 312].

STANLEY K. HORNBECK.

The Guardians of the Gate: Historical Lectures on the Serbs. By R. G. D. LAFFAN, C.F., Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1918. Pp. 299. 5 sh.)

BEFORE the outbreak of the Great War there was some excuse for ignorance upon the part of intelligent Americans about things Serbian because there existed few books in English upon the subject. During the past two years there have appeared the admirable works of Taylor, Savić, and Temperley, and to these must now be added this excellent book of Laffan. Written by an Englishman who was officially attached to the Serbian army, it evidences a deep sympathy and affection for the Serbian people and a sincere belief in the justice of their aspiration for the unity and independence of the South Slavs. But it everywhere shows a scholarly desire to discover the views of Serbia's enemies and a fine restraint from condemning anything except on what amounts to practically positive proof. It is not a polemic, not even a plea for the Serbian cause. It was written to give enlightenment to English-speaking peoples about a race of whom they had hitherto heard only from unfriendly sources, from German and Magyar writers. Mr. Laffan not only gives enlightenment but he carries conviction, and the impartial reader closes the book persuaded by the array of facts and reasons that justice is with the Serbs. Intelligent perusal of the book is helped by the three maps which are inserted, and the reader who is interested in continuing the study of the Serbs will be assisted by the discriminating bibliography which accompanies the book.

The author's chief aim is to explain the present status of the Serbs as "Guardians of the Gate", *i. e.*, the gate to the East. To understand this he devotes the first quarter of the book to a brief but illuminating history of the Serbs down to the treaty of Berlin. In this history he explains not only the Serbs' political development but also their peculiar economic institutions such as the *Zadruga*; the great importance of their ballads and of their church in maintaining their national spirit during the Turkish night; and how to a peculiar degree the Serbs, unlike the Greeks and Bulgarians, achieved their own independence. In the second quarter of the volume the author describes the gradual evolution of Serbia from a condition of vassalage to Austria-Hungary under Milan to a state of independence under Peter down to 1914. In this part of his book Mr. Laffan shows an intimate and accurate knowledge of the diplomacy leading to the formation of the Balkan League, the Turkish war, and the fratricidal war between the Balkan allies.

The third quarter of the book explains the reasons for the Austro-German determination to remove the sole obstacle to the *Drang nach Osten*, the Guardian of the Gate. There exists no more inspiring story in all history than the account of the magnificent fight of the little state against overwhelming odds, in which she three times drove the armies of Austria-Hungary headlong over the border and succumbed only to a union of forces, of betrayal by Bulgaria, desertion by Greece, neglect by the Allies, and determination to bring about a decision by Germany. The final chapter describes the sad condition of the Serbs at the present time and their hopes for the future based wholly upon the event of an Allied victory. The pact of Corfu between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which will be the basis of the constitution of Yugoslavia, is given in full, and also a fair and restrained statement of the conflict of interests between South Slavs and Italians. The book is commended to the attention of intelligent laymen. It is not intended for scholars.

STEPHEN P. DUGGAN.

The Roots of the War: a Non-Technical History of Europe, 1870-1914 A. D. By WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS, Ph.D., in collaboration with WILLIAM ANDERSON, Ph.D., and MASON W. TYLER, Ph.D., of the University of Minnesota. (New York: Century Company. 1918. Pp. viii, 557. \$1.50.)

As the title suggests, this book is an attempt to simplify for the average intelligent citizen the complexity of factors which led up to the great catastrophe, and to the reviewer the attempt seems to have met with notable success. The book is an excellent example of the work of men who refuse to accept the old Oxonian dictum that "while it is easy to write something true and something interesting, it is impossible to write anything both true and interesting". The authors have discarded the orthodox phraseology of historical text-books, and, although they make no effort to attain what is termed "brilliancy" of style, the narrative